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Chairman: Mr. MacKay ..... (New Zealand)
later: Ms. Samayoa-Recari (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Guatemala)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Kuznetsov

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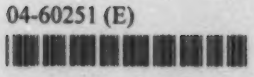

The meeting was called to order at 9.50 a.m.

Agenda item 109: Programme planning (*continued*) (A/59/6 (Part One) and Corr.1, A/59/6 (Part Two (Progs. 1-26)), A/59/16, A/59/69, A/59/79 and A/59/878; A/C.5/59/13, A/C.5/59/14 and A/C.5/59/15)

1. **Mr. Kramer** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, said that, although the revised planning and budget process approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 58/269, on the strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change, was being implemented for the first time and was a work in progress, it was already evident that the changes that had been made were for the better and would help the Organization to respond to evolving circumstances. Senior programme managers had confirmed that aligning the planning period with the two-year budget period had provided a more realistic basis for planning and programming.

2. Rather than repeat the debates that had taken place in the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) regarding Part One (plan outline) of the report on its forty-fourth session (A/59/16), the Member States should focus on endorsing the eight priorities previously identified. Those priorities had guided the work of the Organization since 1988 and, despite changes in the world, still captured its aims. There could, however, be no static approach, as programmes, subprogrammes and specific activities must reflect current and possible future circumstances and be implemented effectively.

3. Although the planning and budget cycle had improved, the Committee for Programme and Coordination had failed, for the second year running, to consider and improve its working methods in order to add value commensurate with the time and effort it consumed. A major overhaul was required, and must include shorter sessions, a sharp reduction in the time devoted to redrafting indicators of achievement and a shift towards drawing lessons from evaluation and programme-performance findings. The three delegations for which he spoke agreed with the Committee for Programme and Coordination that the report of the Secretary-General on priority-setting (A/59/87) should be taken up in 2005, if at all.

4. **Mr. Terzi** (Turkey) noted that the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 was the first comprehensive results-based budget prepared by the Organization. Results-based budgeting would encourage the United Nations to be more accountable and goal-oriented, which would require a fundamental change in the organizational culture. While that would take time, managers could expedite the process by committing fully to results-based management and promoting staff participation, team building, innovation and continuous learning. Since results-based budgeting was relatively new, it was too early to reach conclusions that would affect strategic decisions in the next budget period. However, his delegation would expect the Administration to produce desired result-actual performance comparisons with previous periods so that results could be used to manage and adjust ongoing operations and, ultimately, for strategic planning.

5. In the light of the complexity and continuously evolving nature of United Nations activities, delegations could not expect to engage in micromanagement. It was therefore crucial to have a sound accountability structure, strong internal and external control mechanisms, a rational division of labour and structured reporting mechanisms, as well as enhanced monitoring and evaluation systems so that Member States could see the results of their strategic policy decisions. In that context, his delegation welcomed the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives (A/59/79), which merited close attention.

6. It was important to take a comprehensive and integrated approach to reform. In that connection, he recalled that Member States had approved a number of reforms affecting their own working methods. In order to streamline the complex and costly process of planning and budgeting, a strategic framework had been introduced, consisting of a plan outline and a biennial programme plan. He was pleased to note that the proposed strategic framework (A/59/6) both reduced micromanagement and enabled delegations to connect the biennial budget with the Organization's long-term objectives. The Committee for Programme and Coordination was also seeking to improve its working methods. Regrettably, there had been little progress in that area, despite the Committee's hard work at its forty-fourth session.

7. He had taken note with interest of the recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (A/59/16, para. 349) concerning activity-

based cost accounting. While cost accounting was a useful way for managers to determine the cost of acquiring or utilizing resources in an organization, it was more readily applicable in manufacturing companies than in public sector and non-profit organizations. Before cost-accounting techniques could be introduced in the United Nations, they would have to be tailored to take account of the diversity and the very particular nature of the Organization's activities. The potential costs and benefits should therefore be carefully considered and best practices explored before any decision was taken.

8. **Mr. Al-Ansari** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the plan outline (A/59/6 (Part One)) was not as balanced as it could have been in terms of issues related to economic, social and cultural development. The internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration and in the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and international agreements since 1992, represented the highest priorities of the Organization and should be duly reflected in the plan outline. The eight priorities of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 (A/57/6/Rev.1) remained valid and should be reaffirmed. The Group noted that the designation of those priorities did not reflect any order of importance. Thus, while there was a continuing need to address the many conflicts around the world and to combat international terrorism, the importance given to those issues should not dilute or detract from the importance of development issues, and adequate resources should be made available for all mandated programmes and activities. In that connection, he stressed that the right to development was an essential component of an integrated approach to human rights.

9. The Group noted the use in the plan outline of such terms as "global public goods" and "global commons" (para. 54), as well as others in paragraphs 2, 6, 22 and 26, despite the fact that there was no intergovernmental agreement on their definition or scope. Paragraph 36 of the plan outline stated that the legislative mandates listed in the biennial programme plan were addressed to Governments, intergovernmental bodies, United Nations organizations and other entities, as well as to the Secretary-General, and that responsibility for the success of programmes was therefore neither the exclusive preserve of Member States, acting individually or in intergovernmental organs, nor of the Secretariat. In that context, the Group wished to reiterate that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/231, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement were intended to measure achievements in the implementation of the programmes of the Organization and not those of individual Member States.

10. The Group endorsed the recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Coordination concerning the plan outline (A/59/16, para. 65). In addition, it wished to request that the section on the longer-term objectives of the Organization should be redrafted, in consultation with the substantive departments, so as to reflect the priorities agreed on by Member States at relevant international conferences. The redrafted document should also indicate clearly which Secretariat entities were responsible for implementing those objectives.

11. With regard to the biennial programme plan (A/59/6 (Part Two)), he emphasized the importance the Group attached to the views provided by the specialized intergovernmental bodies on the various programmes of the strategic framework and to the review of those programmes by the relevant sectoral, functional and regional intergovernmental bodies, in accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (PPBME Rules). In that context, it trusted that the Main Committees would complete their consideration of the programme fascicles referred to them for review by the Committee for Programme and Coordination. Concerning the structure and format of the programmes and the articulation of objectives, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement, the Group noted that certain indicators of achievement remained somewhat abstract and that, without the inclusion of baselines and targets, it was difficult, when reviewing each programme, to assess its relevance and measurability. In addition, some indicators measured the quantity of work rather than the quality of the results achieved. The Secretariat should improve data systems, establish standards, develop manuals and guidelines and conduct training programmes to address those problems.

12. The Committee for Programme and Coordination played a crucial role in the programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation process. The

Group therefore welcomed the Committee's continuing efforts to improve its working methods and procedures and its decision to give priority to that item at its next session. It respected the intergovernmental nature of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and considered it the most appropriate forum for that discussion.

13. Concerning the programme performance report of the United Nations for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/59/69), the Group noted with appreciation that the Secretariat had been successfully implementing new and revised mandates adopted during 2002-2003, including the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It was concerned, however, that the preparation of a significant proportion of the indicators of achievement without baseline data could have affected the accuracy of the information contained in the programme performance report. While it welcomed the recommendation (A/59/16, para. 41) that future reporting on programme performance should be more closely aligned with objectives, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement, it trusted that information on outputs would continue to be provided. The Secretariat should also ensure that concrete explanations were provided in illustration of the attainment of expected accomplishments, since some of the explanations provided in the current report were too vague and generic. Consistent standards should be set for surveys and other performance measures, which, in turn, would ensure that common benchmarks were used to evaluate results. As to the Secretary-General's proposal for a modified biennial programme performance report focusing on the achievement of expected results (A/58/395, para. 43 (e)), the Group noted that the General Assembly, in its resolution 58/269, had merely urged the Secretary-General to improve the format and timing of programme performance and evaluation reports.

14. Lastly, all mandated programmes and activities should be monitored, adjusted, as necessary, and fully implemented, in accordance with the PPBME Rules, while all programme managers should strictly adhere to the resolutions, regulations and rules related to results-based budgeting and management. In particular, the discontinuation of outputs derived from legislative mandates should be approved by the relevant intergovernmental body.

15. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the Group wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. At its forty-fourth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination had devoted a great deal of time to its consideration of the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 (A/59/6). That had prevented it from reaching conclusions on possible measures to improve its working methods and procedures. The Group attached great importance to that matter and welcomed the Committee's decision to revert to it at the beginning of its next session.

16. The Group appreciated the efforts of the Office of Internal Oversight Services to improve the format and content of the programme performance report. It noted with satisfaction that, in the period under review, the implementation rate for mandated outputs had been 84 per cent, 1 per cent higher than the rate achieved in 2000-2001. The programme performance report for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/59/69) provided the first opportunity to evaluate the application of the results-based logical framework. The Group would therefore have expected the Secretariat to explain in greater detail why it had not been able to achieve full implementation of programmed outputs or why a relatively low implementation rate had been achieved in some areas, and it trusted that fuller information would be included in future reports. In order to measure results, it was necessary, when formulating expected accomplishments, to have reliable data for establishing baselines against which the Secretariat could evaluate its performance. The Group welcomed the collaboration in that area between the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Programme Planning and Budget Division and the training provided for managers and staff in the application of the results-based framework. It trusted that the Secretariat would expand on the progress made in establishing and collecting baseline and target data, as well as on benchmarking in the next performance report, and that programme managers would be fully engaged in gathering and analysing performance data.

17. With regard to the proposed strategic framework, the Group endorsed the views of the Group of 77 and China on the plan outline (A/59/6 (Part One)). As to the biennial programme plan (A/59/6 (Part Two)), it noted with satisfaction that the Committee for Programme and Coordination had expressed strong

support for programme 9 (United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development) and appreciation for the role played and contributions made thus far by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa. It was important for United Nations system entities to increase their activities in support of NEPAD. That could only be done with increased coordination among them. The Group was therefore pleased to note that the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the Committee for Programme and Coordination were focusing on that matter. It concurred with the conclusions and recommendations made by the latter body in paragraphs 168 and 469 to 476 of its report (A/59/16).

18. Concerning programme 14 (Economic and social development in Africa), the Group was encouraged by the progress made by the Economic Commission for Africa in aligning the overall objectives of its programmes with the goals and priorities of NEPAD and the internationally agreed development goals. It welcomed the emphasis placed by the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the Commission's coordination function, particularly in respect of NEPAD. It agreed that the Commission's programmes could be amended to reflect its role in the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002), including the regional implementation meetings it hosted. It noted that vigorous action to address the challenge of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other infectious diseases would form an essential component of the Commission's work in 2006-2007.

19. Lastly, the Group wished to emphasize the importance it attached to the respective roles of the Fifth Committee, the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) in the intergovernmental review of the planning, programming and budgeting process.

20. **Ms. Bethel** (Bahamas) said it was regrettable that the Committee for Programme and Coordination had not been able to make recommendations on Part One of the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 and on some sections of Part Two. However, her delegation recognized that there were difficulties in reaching a consensus in any intergovernmental process. It welcomed the Committee's report (A/59/16) and fully supported the recommendations contained therein.

21. In order for the strategic framework to be truly strategic, it must take account of the Organization's longer-term objectives. In that context, her delegation was disappointed that the plan outline (A/59/6 (Part One)) contained no substantive reference to drug control and international crime prevention, which had been among the eight priorities identified for the periods 1998-2001 and 2002-2005 and proposed for the period 2006-2007. The conditions that had led to those priorities continued to persist, and her delegation therefore supported their retention. It had noted with interest the paragraphs devoted to lessons learned for, if the Organization was to achieve its objectives, it was important to learn from past experience.

22. Her delegation strongly supported the efforts of the Committee for Programme and Coordination to monitor United Nations support for NEPAD and concurred with the conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraphs 469 to 476 of the Committee's report. In particular, it agreed that there was a need for a sustained drive to engage partners to support NEPAD. It welcomed the focus of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on ensuring coordinated implementation of the Millennium Declaration. As the Committee for Programme and Coordination stated, it was necessary to avoid duplication and ensure complementarity of efforts between the Board and other inter-agency bodies in the follow-up to and reporting on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and other United Nations conferences and summits.

23. Her delegation wished to encourage the Committee for Programme and Coordination to continue its good work in the area of evaluation. It strongly supported the proposal that the Committee should conduct thematic evaluations, since the findings of such evaluations would allow it to address coordination and cooperation among United Nations programmes. It had taken note of the Committee's wish to continue its consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on priority-setting (A/59/87) at its forty-fifth session. However, it believed that the General Assembly should complete its consideration of the matter at its current session.

24. The Committee for Programme and Coordination was a technical body established to provide advice on programme coordination, monitoring, evaluation and implementation. Over the years, it had strayed somewhat from that mission. Consequently, its

recommendations had been vulnerable to criticism. That was regrettable, since it was a very useful body. Her delegation was an active member of the Committee and attached great importance to its work. It therefore regretted that, owing to lack of time, it had been unable to make specific recommendations on measures to improve its working methods and procedures. There had, however, been a fruitful exchange of views, and proposals had been made on which it could build at its next session. While change was needed, her delegation wished to caution the General Assembly against imposing reforms without allowing the Committee for Programme and Coordination itself to deliberate further on the issue. Experience had shown that reform efforts were much more successful when they had the added value of the considered recommendations of the body to be reformed.

25. **Mr. Tal** (Jordan) said that proper strategic planning was a prerequisite for the successful implementation of legislative mandates; it ensured that the Organization's long-term objectives were well defined and mapped out the most efficient way to achieve them.

26. While his delegation appreciated the attempt to sum up those long-term objectives in the plan outline (A/59/6 (Part One)), there had been undue emphasis on certain objectives at the expense of others. More specifically, while terrorism and global security were important, the issues of economic, social and political development were equally important. For that reason, his delegation had always associated a successful international collective effort against terrorism with addressing its root causes: poverty, illiteracy and hopelessness.

27. The Secretariat and Member States shared responsibility for the success of programmes and the effective implementation of legislative mandates. While it was up to the Member States to ensure that intergovernmental deliberations produced focused, unequivocal and clear mandates, it was up to the Secretariat to find the most efficient ways of fulfilling those mandates and to provide Member States with complete, accurate and timely information. Only in that way could the Member States and the Secretariat claim full partnership and collective responsibility.

28. The report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/59/69) was the first to follow the results-based budgeting format, clearly defining objectives and linking them to expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement. That enabled programme managers and others concerned to identify and maintain best practices, recognize implementation problems and take timely and swift corrective action. However, it must be remembered that General Assembly resolution 58/269 on the strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change was only the beginning of streamlining the United Nations planning and budgeting process.

29. Resolution 58/269 also stipulated that replacing the medium-term plan with the strategic framework and the new division of labour between the Fifth Committee, the Advisory Committee and the Committee for Programme and Coordination would be undertaken on a trial basis and would be open to future evaluation. While it was therefore too early for the Committee to pass judgement on the new process, it must focus on consolidating results-based budgeting and management within the United Nations system and on improving the Organization's ability to define its objectives clearly and link them to expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement. His delegation would work to ensure that reformed planning and budgeting was non-selective, transparent and accountable.

30. **Mr. Park** Yoon-June (Republic of Korea) said that, despite the unprecedented burden caused by the change to results-based budgeting, the Committee for Programme and Coordination had been able, thanks to the efforts of its bureau, to submit the report of its forty-fourth session (A/59/16) to the Fifth Committee. The plan outline in Part One of the report would help the Organization to meet the challenges of the biennium 2006-2007 and beyond, with clear strategic guidance for each programme. The 26 parts of the biennial programme plan in Part Two included overall orientation, objectives, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement, and were divided into subprogrammes. His delegation agreed with the view expressed on behalf of the European Union at the previous meeting that the Committee should confine itself to reaffirming the priorities identified in previous medium-term plans.

31. His delegation was concerned that the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) contained recommendations on only 21 of the 26 programmes; that hampered discussion of

programme planning in the Fifth Committee, which had since received recommendations from the First Committee and the Fourth Committee on two further programmes out of the remaining five. His delegation shared the concern of other delegations that CPC had also been unable to improve its own working methods or to establish broadly defined strategic recommendations to guide the Secretariat in implementing results-based budgeting, limiting itself instead to making minor editorial changes. Priority should be given to both matters at its forty-fifth session.

32. The format of the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/59/69) had been much improved by focusing on results achieved rather than outputs produced. His delegation commended the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) for distributing the report in hard copy, CD-ROM and on the Internet, but urged that the report itself should be more concise and therefore more user-friendly. With regard to the report of OIOS on Strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives (A/59/79), it echoed the recommendation of OIOS that programme managers should pay more attention to the planning of monitoring and evaluation activities.

33. **Ms. Goicochea** (Cuba) said that, coming at a time when the Organization was facing criticism, and shortly after the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 58/269 on the strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change, the report of CPC was important. Cuba fully supported CPC as the intergovernmental body responsible for planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. However, many problems had arisen not because CPC was inefficient — though it must certainly examine its working methods to improve efficiency — but rather because the Member States had been unable to reach a political consensus. Those difficulties would never have occurred if the biennial programmes of work had been fully aligned with existing mandates, with no interpretations or omissions. She agreed with the representative of the Bahamas that improving working methods was a matter for CPC itself to determine.

34. The proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 (A/59/6, Part One and Part Two) was the first of its kind and must be considered to have been prepared on a trial basis, in accordance with paragraph 5 of resolution 58/269. There had been problems with the approval of a number of the programmes in the biennial programme plan, so the Secretariat must review the process to ensure that lessons were drawn from experience. Her delegation regretted that there was too little time to discuss individual programmes at formal meetings of the Committee; it would make its views known in informal consultations and emphasized that its acceptance of that situation at the current session must not be seen as a precedent. The summary records of the Committee's meetings must indicate the Member States' positions, particularly regarding programmes on which no consensus could be reached.

35. Her delegation was unhappy with the way in which the CPC report reflected the intense debate among the Member States regarding individual programmes. That had not been the fault of the bureau, but rather of the Secretariat, which had given an unbalanced view of the discussions. The lack of balance must be corrected, as in order to maintain the pace of their work, Member States tended to rely on the summary of the debate given in the report's conclusions and recommendations. In particular, the plan outline (Part One) had placed too little emphasis on the issue of development, despite the attention it had been given in major international conferences, not least the Millennium Summit. Instead of accurately portraying the outcome of consultations with Secretariat departments and the positions of a number of delegations, it had acquired an inappropriate ideological slant.

36. As in the case of the proposed strategic framework, her delegation had joined the consensus regarding the adoption of the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/59/69) but recalled that the General Assembly had not approved all of the proposals in the report of the Secretary-General on improvements to the current process of planning and budgeting (A/58/395 and Corr.1). It expressed support for the conclusions and recommendations in paragraphs 38 and 41 of the report of CPC, and assumed that information on outputs would continue to be given.

37. While it supported the CPC proposal that it should take up the report of the Secretary-General on priority-setting (A/59/87) again at its following session, her delegation took issue with the content of that report, which set out a position that seemed to be

directly contrary to the priorities established for the Organization's programmes. The matter must be examined from a technical point of view, and the reassignment of resources within programmes — a prominent feature of the 2004-2005 budget — must be governed by clear guidelines in order to avoid any element of arbitrariness.

38. **Mr. Elji** (Syrian Arab Republic) associated his delegation with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, particularly with regard to the terminology used in paragraphs 2, 6, 22 and 26 of the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 (A/59/6, Part One) and the need to revise the plan outline to reflect the long-standing objectives of the Organization. When the strategic framework was revised, the anomalous terminology should be deleted.

39. While the working methods of the Committee for Programme and Coordination had been correct in principle, it had failed to fulfil its function, blurring the distinction between technical and budgetary matters. Some Member States, especially major contributors which criticized CPC for inefficiency, had tried to use financial considerations to alter legislative mandates rather than simply translate those mandates into programmes. In some cases, such as programme 21 (Palestine refugees), some Member States had invoked financial considerations in order to exclude legislative mandates, while in others, such as programme 2 (Political affairs) they had tried to impose political programmes. In connection with programme 1 (General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management), the Secretariat had made an incomplete submission, particularly from the point of view of the use of official languages and the supply of hard copies of documents. His delegation was concerned that programme 6 (Legal affairs) went beyond the legislative mandates adopted and the remit of CPC.

40. As a technical body, CPC must keep to its mandate. Prolonged debate had caused time to be wasted and some programmes in the biennial programme plan had not been discussed. Similarly, lack of time had left CPC unable to complete its evaluation of the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/59/69), which, in any event, omitted some data and had been transferred electronically in part, despite the request for hard copies in all official languages. Moreover, the work of CPC was important enough to merit summary records.

41. *Ms. Samayoa-Recari (Guatemala), Vice-Chairman, took the chair.*

42. **Mr. Kozaki** (Japan) said that his delegation supported the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 (A/59/6, Part One and Part Two), which reflected the Organization's long-term objectives. However, for CPC to be effective, it must undertake reform. While the General Assembly, through its resolution 58/269 on the strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change, had given CPC a mandate for reform, CPC had not given the matter complete consideration, for reasons including lack of time.

43. In order to be able to add value to the budgeting and programming process, CPC must focus more on monitoring and evaluation. In that regard, cost accounting would be a useful tool. Finally, he said that the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/59/69) was useful and OIOS should further improve it.

44. **Mr. Simancas** (Mexico) wondered whether the Third Committee's discussion of programme 19 (Human rights), scheduled for later in the day, would affect the Fifth Committee's consideration of that matter.

45. **Mr. Abelian** (Secretary of the Committee), in response to the question posed by the representative of Mexico, said that the bureaux of the Third and Fifth Committees would be meeting that afternoon in order to discuss the progress made with programme 19: Human rights.

46. **Ms. Udo** (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination) expressed her gratitude to Member States for their interest in the work of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. In response to the comments made by the representative of the Republic of Korea, she said that five programmes had been referred to the Main Committees of the General Assembly for review and action. To her knowledge, all those Committees, with the exception of the Third Committee, had concluded their consideration of the programmes and taken the appropriate action.

Agenda item 113: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/C.5/59/L.10)

47. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to consider draft resolution A/C.5/59/L.10, entitled "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations".

48. *Draft resolution A/C.5/59/L.10 was adopted.*

Agenda item 118: Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (*continued*) (A/59/359 and A/58/785)

49. **Mr. Hills** (Officer of the Deputy Secretary-General), responding to the question posed by the representative of the United States of America on the Secretariat's follow-up to the organizational integrity initiative, reaffirmed the importance attached by the Secretary-General to integrity, ethical conduct and accountability and his commitment to addressing the concerns identified in the recent integrity perception survey.

50. In that connection, progress had been made on several fronts. First, the full results of the survey, together with a letter addressed to all staff outlining follow-up plans, had been published on the Internet. Departmental town-hall meetings had been scheduled in order to discuss the findings of the survey in the context of the specific realities of each department, and the senior-level group responsible for implementing those plans, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, had convened its first meeting. An informal body of staff volunteers would also be formed in order to strengthen dialogue with staff on integrity issues.

51. Second, a working group, led by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), had also been convened in order to formulate more rigorous whistle-blower protection policies and a draft policy document was currently under discussion. Third, with a view to raising awareness about the Organization's code of professional conduct and providing information on dispute resolution, the Office of Human Resources Management was incorporating integrity concepts into the staff development curriculum and induction and senior-level orientation programmes. It was also in the process of reviewing the policies of different organizations on workplace harassment and intended to issue an administrative instruction on that issue in the near future. Lastly, a proposal for overhauling the high-level Accountability Panel was currently under consideration.

52. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division, Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts), referring to paragraph 53 of the annual report of OIOS (A/59/359), recalled that the representative of Cuba had expressed concern that the permanent staff capacity of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management had been set below the required level. In recent years, the Department's budget had been under considerable strain and, owing mainly to its efforts to respond to every request for meeting services, had accrued a deficit of approximately $30 million by the end of the previous biennium. However, considerable efforts had been made to streamline the management of the Department and, as a result, an additional $14 million had been added to the budget in order to ensure that resources were commensurate with requirements.

53. Budget forecasting was not an exact science. It was impossible to divine precise conference-servicing requirements in advance and, moreover, whether or not the resources allocated for that purpose were adequate depended not only on the amount of those resources but also on their efficient use. At present, however, no serious gap existed between resource requirements and allocation. Nevertheless, in an effort to improve the relationship between input and output, the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management would continue to make use of new technologies.

54. The representative of Cuba had also requested clarification as to the rationale behind the Secretary-General's suggestion that a comprehensive review of the operations of OIOS should be initiated. Although such a review would provide an opportunity to identify areas of weakness and develop measures to further strengthen the Office, it would be up to the General Assembly itself to decide whether or not to proceed with the exercise and to define its terms of reference.

55. **Mr. Da Costa** (Director of the Logistics Support Division, Department of Peacekeeping Operations), responding to the remarks relating to the cockpit voice recorder made by the representative of Cuba said that the OIOS investigation had concluded that the voice recorder in the possession of the United Nations was not from the presidential plane crash of 6 April 1994, but that it had not been properly tracked or examined. Staff in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations

had concluded, merely on visual inspection, that the voice recorder was not from the plane crash and that assumption had coloured every subsequent decision, including the failure to report up the chain of command. In addition, the reporting mechanisms within the Department did not keep senior management sufficiently aware of developments in the field.

56. To address those shortcomings, OIOS had recommended that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should conduct a risk analysis of information flow through the internal chain of command and introduce procedures that would mitigate the risk of failing to report important matters to senior managers, particularly during times of crisis. It had also recommended improving archiving procedures and facilities. All those recommendations had been accepted by the Department and were in the process of being implemented.

57. **Ms. Goicochea** (Cuba) expressed her thanks to Mr. Sach and Mr. Da Costa for their remarks, but requested that they should be circulated in written form. While she had taken note of the recent improvements in the budgetary position of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, her specific concerns about the Department's insufficient staffing level had not been addressed. Although budgetary forecasting was not an exact science, resource planning should be. The Secretariat must ensure that sufficient resources were available to enable the General Assembly to fulfil its legislative mandate.

58. Although her delegation did not see why a review of OIOS was necessary, it was willing to pursue discussions on the issue. However, further clarification was required as to the modalities of such a review. She wished to know whether reviews of OIOS had ever been conducted by entities from individual Member States and, if so, on how many occasions, and whether those reviews had been carried out pursuant to any specific mandate or terms of reference.

59. Lastly, the cockpit voice recorder incident had revealed serious inefficiencies within the Secretariat. In the context of the reform of the Organization, a genuine accountability mechanism must be implemented in order to prevent the recurrence of such shortcomings.

60. **Mr. Elji** (Syrian Arab Republic) voiced the serious concerns of his delegation regarding the insufficiency of resources for conference servicing and pointed out that the failure to respect the principle of multilingualism constituted a violation of the Charter of the United Nations. The Office of Internal Oversight Services had concluded that the resources requested by the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management for the biennium 2002-2003 were not adequate to meet conference-servicing needs. It was therefore very surprising to see that the Department had requested an even lower level of resources for the biennium 2004-2005. In its first performance report for the current biennium, the Secretariat must ensure that it requested sufficient resources to enable it to fulfil its mandate. In that connection, his delegation would, if necessary, support the granting of extra resources to the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management.

61. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services) said that the activities of OIOS were carried out pursuant to the relevant General Assembly resolutions defining its mandate, in particular resolution 54/244. Its recommendations tended to relate solely to the organizational structures and working methods of the audited entities and great care was taken to avoid making any recommendations that would impinge on the legislative mandates of those entities, since intergovernmental approval must be sought for any substantive changes. For instance, the audit of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) had given rise to a recommendation designed to improve working methods in the area of statistical information, which entailed no changes to its mandate.

62. Turning to the remarks made by the representative of Cuba in relation to the suggested review of OIOS, he said that it would take place only once the General Assembly had given its approval and determined specific terms of reference. Although he was always willing to discuss the general activities of the Office with representatives of Member States, no in-depth review of OIOS had ever been conducted by national entities and there were no plans to allow such reviews in future, since the Office was not subject to any outside scrutiny that had not been mandated by the General Assembly.

63. **Mr. Elji** (Syrian Arab Republic) recognized that the work of OIOS had improved significantly over the previous five years and that there had been far fewer incidences of deviation from its mandate. His remarks

about the audit of the regional commissions had been based on the assumption that the commissions would conduct their own reviews of the audit, which would then be examined by their Member States.

64. **Ms. Goicochea** (Cuba) said that, while she agreed with the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic that the work of OIOS had improved significantly over the past five years, any decisions, even of an administrative nature, taken by intergovernmental bodies constituted an integral part of their mandate and, as such, should not be the subject of OIOS recommendations.

65. Turning once again to the issue of the suggested review of OIOS, she said she knew that at least one Member State had carried out a review of the Office in the years preceding Mr. Nair's appointment. No United Nations structure should be subject to scrutiny by national oversight bodies, although informal exchanges on general issues between the Office and Member States should be encouraged as they increased mutual understanding.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.